



The Holy See

CONCERT IN HONOUR OF THE HOLY FATHER
OFFERED BY ENI (THE ITALIAN OIL AND GAS COMPANY)

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Aula Paul VI Audience Hall

Friday, 1 October 2010

(Video)

*Venerable Brothers,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

I wish first of all to give my heartfelt thanks to ENI, in the person of the President, Prof. Roberto Poli who has graciously introduced this evening. Some time ago ENI offered to organize a concert to coincide with the restoration work on the side walls of St Peter's Basilica. After the memorable cleaning of the façade, admired by millions of pilgrims during the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, this more recent enterprise is in full swing: entering the Vatican through the Arch of the Bells or the Petriano Gate, one is struck - looking at the part that has already been completed - by the aspect of the Travertine that appears almost soft and velvety, as we have never seen it before. This too is a great "orchestral" work, and all those who direct it and who carry it out with skill and effort deserve an applause!

And so ENI had the idea of a concert perhaps to make up for the noise that this work inevitably produces! The Orchestra and Choir of the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, were invited for this reason; it is worth mentioning that these two institutions, because of their history, the quality of their musical skill and their typically "Italian" sound represent Rome and Italy in the global musical arena. I would like to congratulate all the members of the orchestra and choir, expressing the hope that they will always be able to renew themselves in spirit, to give life as they are doing this

evening to immortal works. In particular, I express my deep appreciation to Neeme Järve, the conductor, to Andrea Lucchesini, the pianist, and to Ciro Visco, the choirmaster. I also extend a special greeting to the group of poor people, who receive help from the Diocesan *Caritas* and whom I wanted to invite so that they might experience this moment of joy with us.

And now, a brief reflection on the music we have just heard one of the "London Symphonies" by Haydn, known as "the Surprise Symphony", or "*mit dem Paukenschlag*" ("with the kettledrum stroke") because of the characteristic use of the drums in the second movement; the *Choral Fantasy* by Beethoven, a passage of a rather atypical kind in the range of Beethoven's opus but that sums up the expressive possibilities of solo, orchestral and choral music; and between them, "*Cecilia, vergine romana*" by Arvo Pärt. The two works of Haydn and Beethoven have resonated with the full wealth and potential of the symphonic music of Classical and Romantic periods. With this music the human genius vies with nature in creativity gives life to various, multiform harmonies where the human voice also participates in this language, which as it were mirrors the great cosmic symphony. This form in particular is characteristic of the Romantic and late Romantic period, but goes beyond it, and represents a universal dimension of this art, a way of conceiving man and his place in the world.

On the other hand although Pärt's work avails itself of a similar instrumentation, a symphonic orchestra and a choir, it wishes to give a voice to another reality that does not belong to the natural world: it gives a voice to the testimony of faith in Christ: in a word, "martyrdom". It is interesting that this testimony is impersonated by St Cecilia: a martyr who is also Patroness of music and opera.

Thus it is also necessary to congratulate those who conceived of the concert's programme, since the juxtaposition of this work on St Cecilia with the works of Haydn and Beethoven provides a contrast rich in meaning that is food for thought. The text of the martyrdom of the Saint and the special style that interprets it in a musical key seem to symbolize the place and task of faith in the universe: amidst the vital forces of nature, that are around and within human beings, faith is a different force that corresponds to a profound saying, "came forth from silence", in the words of St Ignatius of Antioch. The words of faith need deep inner silence, to listen to and obey a voice that is *beyond* the visible and tangible. This voice also speaks *through* the phenomena of nature for it is the power that created and governs the universe. To recognize it, however, we need a humble and obedient heart, as the Saint we are commemorating today also teaches us: St Thérèse of the Child Jesus. Faith follows this deep voice wherever art itself alone cannot arrive: it follows this voice on the path of the witness, of offering oneself out of love, as did Cecilia. Then the most beautiful work of art, the masterpiece of the human being, is his every act of authentic love, from the smallest in daily martyrdom to the extreme sacrifice. Here life itself becomes a hymn: an anticipation of the symphony we shall sing together in Heaven. Thank you again and have a good evening.

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